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GAS ENGINES.
TOOLS, SUPPLIES
AND ACCESSORIES
ROCKETS & SUPPLIES

Bob Fabris
ARADIAN
3626 Morrie Dr.
San Jose, CA 95127-9990

~~RECEIVED~~
5/10/82

Dear Bob:

Well, another fine issue of the ARADIAN is out, I see. The new format looks like a good idea--the thing WAS getting a little ad-heavy. Your tape loading discussion will be a big help to the new ARADIANS out there, I'm sure. Apparently tape I/O is a big problem for a lot of the new ARADE owners, and anything that can be done to educate them is a good idea. How about a second discussion on dumping programs to tape with new BASIO?

Just a reminder that I am MOST interested in the new Z-Grass unit. I mention it now, not to bug you, but because you asked those interested in being in the "first wave" to let you know. Scott Collins (also an ABC employee) also wants to be included, and you can send info on anything you come up with to both of us here at ABC.

The ad in V4 N6 ARADIAN has done wonders for our mail order business--in fact the response was almost more than we could handle! We have a brand-new 12-page illustrated catalog that we are very proud of. (Did you get the copy I sent to you?) Since the ad, TINY ARADE has joined our list of software producers carried in stock. We are working out things with ANDERSON RESEARCH & DESIGN right now. We also carry BIT FIDDLERS MLM and software. We are always interested in expanding the number of lines we carry, as long as we can get software/hardware/accessories of a quality to match our current lines.

We got the new Sourcebook from Richard Houser today. My goodness, there's SO MUCH for the Bally/Astro unit these days! And the promise of even more with Z-Grass 100, etc. is there. Now if ASTROVISION can just keep it rolling along! I will be meeting with some of the ASTROVISION folks in a couple of days at a sale meeting held by Midstates Appliance, one of my suppliers. I hope to pin them down regarding Z-Grass 100, promotion plans for the Xmas market, new VIDEOCADES, etc. I'll let you know what I find out.



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My roommate, Greg Poehlein, just purchased a LINE PRINTER VII from Radio Shack for his TRS-80 Mod. 1. This little jewel has both serial & parallel ports (switch selectable), so I dragged out my old BASIC interface and did the printer modification to it. I understand from your discussion this issue that the output of the interface must be stepped up for printing, correct? I intend to try the TTL-to-RS232 interface from VOL. I ARADIAN, as suggested.

I'll write again after my talk with the ASTROVISION rep on Wednesday.

Sincerely,

Guy W. McLimore, Jr.

P.S. Have you noticed all the ASTRO ARCADE material popping up in the industry publications and in video-freak magazines like VIDEO and ELECTRONIC GAMES? Check out the latest issue of ELECT. GAMES, which has a "Test Lab" feature on the ARCADE....

Bob Fabris
3626 Morrie Dr.
San Jose, CA 95127

7
May 29, 1979
Dund 6/3

Dear Bob:

Got your letter today at the same time as I received the STARTREK program I ordered from Scott Waldinger. I haven't had time to type in the listing yet, but it looks like he has found a unique way around the Bally's lack of substantial memory and multi-dimensional arrays. I'll let you know more when I've fully tested it.

As I said before, it is quite possible that the SIMON program--as revised--is OK and I am wrong. I will now recheck my listing line by line and see what I can find. Maybe I should just redo the whole thing--probably be better than trying to spot my existing error. Glad to have the Checkers correction, since Bally has held up the Videcade version. The programmer deserves applause for his work, as I would have bet it couldn't be done in 1800 characters.

I'm glad you like SKYROCKET. There's obviously much that can be done with LINE and BOX, especially using the reverse technique. We've just scratched the surface of that one.

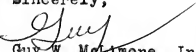
I think you may be right about the add-on, as much as I hate to admit it. I don't have the technical expertise to build a keyboard or a memory expansion myself, but I am definitely in the market if anyone can come up with one for sale. Needless to say, anything I can do to help anyone working on such a project, I am willing to do. It's just a damn shame that we won't get ZGRASS/GRAFIX though. That's the best part of Bally's proposed package. But we definitely must have more memory, a more powerful BASIC, and a full-size ASCII keyboard.

Light pen development is stalled temporarily. I think part of my problem may be with the diodes in the cassette interface adapter plug I'm using. More on this later. If I can get it working, I plan to offer it on the open market through the ARCADIAN.

Any word on the to-be-revised "hacker's manual"? Bally's National Service Manager told me several weeks ago that they planned to reorganize and expand it before general publication so that it became sort of an advanced operations manual. If they don't, I still maintain that someone should. Maybe me, if no one else will. I still have my notes for the proposed manual I once mentioned. With the help of other Arcadians, I can organize the material and I have the necessary background in publishing to put it into useable form.

More later when some of the irons I have in the fire get hotter.

Sincerely,


Guy W. McInnis, Jr.
1210 E. Virginia St.
Evansville, IN 47711

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June 14, 1979

Bob Fabris
3626 Morrie Drive
San Jose, CA 95127

Dear Bob,

Received your letter a couple of days ago. Your additions to SKYROCKET are terrific. I developed the program before I had fully puzzled out the &(9) function. The red vapor trail is just what the program needed!

The corrected correction for CHECKERS is much appreciated. It jumps men, now, but I can't get it to work with the computer's kinged pieces. They just sit in the back row, ignored by the computer entirely, even though the human player's kings work just fine. At the end of the game I played, the program gave up and said "YOU WIN" when I had reduced it to three king pieces in my back row. It never moved the kings during the game at all, nor did the piece reflect it's king status graphically. (The human players kings change from one solid bar to two thinner bars, stacked...)

I will be meeting on Wednesday, June 20 with Bally's national sales manager, who is coming to Evansville for a distributor show. At this time, I intend to get on his case pretty heavy about the keyboard expansion. This may be my only chance to influence Bally on this matter, so I had better make the most of it. The potential is there for Bally to wrap up a large hunk of the personal computer market, but they are blowing it by holding up the keyboard, by failing to provide adequate documentation for Bally BASIC, and by failing to properly promote the system, service current customers, and provide software. I have just seen information on ATARI's new system, and Bally is going to lose customers to this new system if it doesn't provide the keyboard FAST.

What more can you tell me about the new "language chip" you briefly mentioned in your letter? Is it for the current unit as a VIDEOCADE like Bally BASIC? Is it an extended BASIC or a new language altogether? Could they intend to put ZGRASS/GRAPHIX on a cartridge in lieu of producing a keyboard?

I am encouraging all local Bally owners to write Bally encouraging a firmer commitment to expansion of the unit and demanding definite answers on the keyboard. If all 600-plus ARCADIANs would write, maybe it would make a difference. Unfortunately, Bally is in the unique position of being able to well afford to ignore public

OVER

demand, since their income from consumer products is only a tiny, tiny fraction of their total income. They just don't seem to give a damn one way or the other.

I've given your address to two or three Bally owners in this area that I contacted through the Evansville Computer Club. One man I talked to last night was frankly flabbergasted at all the information that was left out of the manual. I showed him ~~MAN~~ &(9), the music oscillator and vibrato controls, ABS(X), the PEEK and POKE functions, ROM subroutines, etc. and he nearly lost his teeth! He echoed the sentiments of so many others--"Why doesn't Bally let people know what they have here?" I wish I had a good answer. (His check, by the way, is no doubt in the mail to you...) 428-0015

P.S. Added 24 hrs. later - Two more new ARCADIAN memberships on the way today...
If you have any suggestions for things I can say to the sales manager, give me a call before Wednesday, June 20. My phone #. is (812) ~~XXXXXX~~ 428-0015 and I am home after 7:30 CST on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday nights for sure, and usually available after 10 p.m. all other nights. Alternatively, call me at work at (812) 477-9661 Mon., Tues., Thurs, or Fri. between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. local time. Don't call between 11:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. though as I am sometimes at lunch. Perhaps you have talked to him already in the past. If so, write me and we'll compare notes.

My light pen still won't work. I will have to breadboard the circuit to check it out. More delays.

This is unofficial and--as yet--not for publication, but I am negotiating with a major wargaming wholesaler in the East to supply him with game support software for the Bally system. He intends to become a Bally wholesaler, and will deal with Bally dealers by mail order if this goes through. I will be acting as his consultant on this project. Nothing is settled yet, but if it works out, we may be able to provide Bally dealers nationwide with a source of reliable software. If you wish, you may run in the ARCADIAN that I am ~~XXXXXXXX~~ interested in hearing from programmers who wish to license or sell their software. I can make NO PROMISES yet, though. It might help if I could give him some idea on these programs--availability, reliability and such. *Again P.S.: Hold off on this. Weighing his still proceeding, but slowly!*

So far, most of the Bally software I've seen is pretty amateurish in ~~man~~ terms of presentation and documentation, while being surprisingly sophisticated in terms of ~~actual~~ actual program writing. What is needed is a tutorial on documentation, and my submission for such an article is enclosed. An improperly documented program is almost as bad as no program at all.

A warning, also unofficial. (please don't quote me as the source...) Apple TV and Computing's software may not be the best quality... I've had a look at a friend's copy of some software he got from them. None of it is documented or comes with instructions, though some limited instructions are a part of the program. Some programs, like FUNANGLE seem to need no extra instructions, whereas most, like their FLIGHT SIMULATOR and SUB SEARCH, are very confusing without more explanations. The programs they offer do not show an authors name. Is Bob Weber in Michigan aware that APPLE TV is selling his programs? (I suppose they are his, as they have the same names...) Is he aware that they are selling them with no documentation and no author credit?

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~~MEMO~~ Tuesday, July 31, 1979

Bob Fabris
ARCADIAN
3626 Morrie Dr.
San Jose, CA 95127

Dear Bob:

Just got the new ARCADIAN today, and I thought I should respond to your front-page questions right away. As for me personally, the answer to all three questions is an unqualified "yes". I want and need a keyboard badly.

As a matter of fact, it may not be too terribly long before I can provide one. The owner of ABC Hobbycraft, Ken Ballard, has commissioned an expert professional hardware/software man to develop a keyboard/64K memory expansion to be sold commercially. The unit is still in the planning stages, but we hope to have it ready by December. We expect to make it available as a semi-kit and as a fully-built unit. No firm price yet, but it should be around the \$350 you mentioned.

Anyone out there who is interested in obtaining more information about this unit should send their name and address to me at the address in the letterhead above. When the unit is ready, I will be glad to send them full specifications, price information, etc. We had not planned to have BASIC-in-ROM, but if anyone out there has worked this out (and knows where to get the ROMs), let me know SOONEST, and perhaps it can be added to the design. If not, 64K gives one plenty of room for a cassette BASIC to be loaded into RAM.

Three cheers for Chuck Thomaa's synthesizer TUTORIAL! The two accompanying programs are very useful. (I wonder how Bell Telephone will feel about them, though, since if you add buttons A thru D to the touch-tone dialer you have a semi-efficient "black box"...) The touch tone dialer doesn't seem to work in my area, though. I think Indiana Bell has an acoustical filter that prevents Touch Tone signals from being input through the microphone in the handset. More later on this.

By popular demand (I'm getting calls from as far away as Pennsylvania!) ABC is accepting mail orders on Bally hardware, W&W software, Stocker Software, Skyrocket Software (my company), and C-10 blank cassettes. Send an SASE for our complete list. (I enclose one for your perusal...)

By the way, tape quality on a lot of stuff listed in the ARCADIAN ads is pretty crummy. The Bally is much more forgiving of cheap tape than the TRS-80, but some brands just don't make it. All my own software, and that

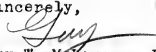
[REDACTED]

sold by SKYROCKET SOFTWARE is now on high-quality C-10 cassettes. Some commercial brands are OK, but the best is Audio-Visual quality or data tape. DON'T use Radio Shack's special data tapes, as they are inferior to the Shack's own Supertape Gold, which is much cheaper! Our W&W Software is on Concertape, which is OK. (Stocker Software-- Dave Stockert that is,...-is also now on Microsette or other high-quality tape.) Even with the cheap tape problem, I have had less trouble loading tapes from other Arcadians than I have putting in commercial TRS-80 programs! Still, good tape is worth using, and is sometimes CHEAPER than the discountstore stuff.

I have been pleasantly surprised by the amount of response I received to the listing of my FANTASY GAMES # 1 package in the ARCADIAN. Despite the fact that it is a limited-use program designed only for those persons familiar with fantasy role-playing games such as DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, the program sold remarkably well! Phenomenally well, in fact, given an audience of relatively few people. (Yes, I know how big the ARCADIAN is, but a very small percentage, statistically, are also gamers...) Thanks for the listing, and I'll keep you informed of new releases. As I have alluded earlier in this letter, I am operating under the name SKYROCKET SOFTWARE now. My partner Greg Poehlein and I intend to produce top-quality software with full documentation for Bally, TRS-80 and eventually other systems. We won't be turning it out fast, but we'll be turning it out GOOD, paralleling Bally's own stated policy of producing fewer, top-quality VIDEOCADES as opposed to Atari's more-is-better philosophy.

More later when I've had time to try some of the new stuff.

Sincerely,


Guy W. McIlmore, Jr.
SKYROCKET SOFTWARE
1210 E. Virginia St.
Evansville, IN 47711
(812) 428-0015



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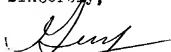
Bob:

Enclosed is copy for our next ARCADIAN ad. PLEASE run the two ad pages SEPARATED in the magazine, if at all possible. I prefer back-to-back to face-to-face, but totally separate is even better.

Also enclosed is our check for the cost of the ad (minus 20% for agreeing to run now through DEC.) Let me know if there are any problems.

By the way, we JUST received the ARCADIAN today, third class. It was postmarked May 6 (today is the 19th...). This third class thing is just not working out. First class is just a few cents more for a package that size, so please ship FIRST CLASS. We will be all too happy to pay the difference! At this rate, we can't get the last ad before the deadline for the next one!

Sincerely,



Guy McLinore